

Here's a text if you've only a minute

"I am the Lord your God". [1st Reading]

The law of the Lord revives the soul. [Resp. Psalm]

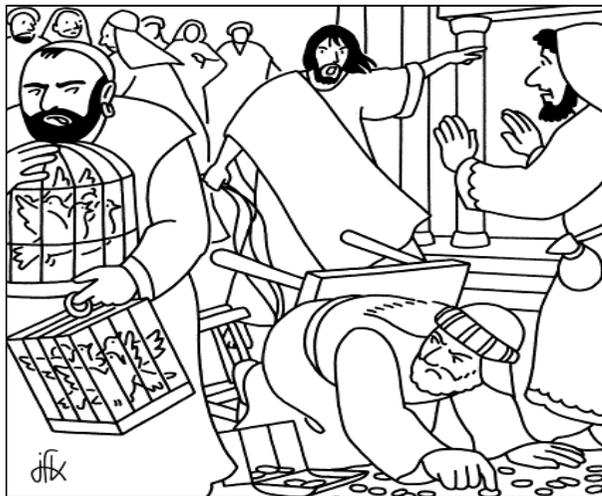
God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. [2nd Reading]

God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son.
[Comm. Ant. Jn. 8: 12]

"Stop turning my Father's house into a market". [Gospel]

Father, you have taught us to overcome our sins by prayer, fasting and works of mercy. When we are discouraged by our weakness, give us confidence in your love. [Old Opening Prayer]

References for this week's readings
Exodus 20:1-17 - Psalm 18
1 Corinthians 1:22-25 - John 2:13-25



**Take all
this out
of here!
Stop
turning
my
Father's
house
into a
market!**



3rd Sunday of Lent
Year B - 8th March 2015

My eyes are always on the Lord, for he rescues my feet from the snare. Turn to me and have mercy on me, for I am alone and poor.
[Ent. Ant. (Psalm 24: 15-16)]

We continue, through Lent, with readings to encourage us as we journey toward the heart of our faith, which is *relationship with God*.

The author of the *1st Reading* wanted his listeners to imagine themselves in the place of the original Hebrew slaves, hearing the 'commandments' for the first time, though not as a list of rules, coming out of the blue, but rather as what constituted them as people of God. They describe the covenant between God and people. The covenant made with Moses, as recalled in today's liturgy, enriches the covenants made with Noah (first Sunday of Lent) and with Abraham (second Sunday of Lent).

The *Psalm* emphasises this point: God's law is not something that restricts life but that which gives joy and delight; something that can be trusted. Today's psalm is a prayer of praise to the God who gives us these laws of life.

In the *2nd Reading*, St Paul preaches Christ crucified to the people of ancient Corinth, for whom following Christ was merely one of many options. Paul's call, however, is a stark one. Following the way of Jesus requires a radical choice.

In today's *Gospel*, John portrays Jesus as causing 'scandal' (literally 'stumbling block' in Greek). Jesus' action at the Temple in Jerusalem (recorded in all four Gospels) is often acknowledged to be among the events that led to his Crucifixion, and how his disciples came to believe in him.

This Lent we pray that, like his disciples, we might come to believe ever more deeply that he is the Lord, with the 'message of eternal life'.

Collect

O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on this confession of our lowliness, that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up by your mercy.

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

While the Jews demand miracles and the Greeks look for wisdom, here are we preaching a crucified Christ; to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the pagans madness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power and the wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

I come to my time of prayer slowly. I give what time I can, humbly acknowledging any worries or burdens I might be carrying. I read this text little by little. I stop, frequently, to ponder. I do not try to understand.

I allow myself to be drawn to certain words or phrases. Perhaps I am struck by the impression of Christ crucified as an 'obstacle' or as 'madness'. How does this make me feel? Is there anything I would like to say to a 'foolish' God who so loves the world that he sent his only Son?

Perhaps I am drawn to the image of Christ as the power and wisdom of God. Do I sense a call in my life to trust God more deeply? Is his foolishness and weakness something I can rely on, or do I prefer to be more self-reliant? I talk to God about my desire to deepen my relationship with him.

I may simply feel called to pause before Christ crucified. How do I feel before this image? What would I like to say? Maybe words of sorrow, compassion, regret... I speak to Jesus on the cross from the heart, as friend to friend.

I spend whatever time I have left before this image of Christ crucified for me, asking for the grace to know him more nearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more closely - even in his suffering.

Gospel - John 2: 13-25

Just before the Jewish Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers, sitting at their counters there. Making a whip out of some cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the pigeon sellers, "Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market." Then his disciples remembered the word of Scripture: Zeal for your house will devour me. The Jews intervened and said, "What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?" Jesus answered, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty six years to build this sanctuary: are you going to raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the words he had said. During his stay in Jerusalem for the Passover many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he gave, but Jesus knew them all and did not trust himself to them; he never needed evidence about any man; he could tell what a man had in him.

As I come into the presence of the Lord, I try to become still and relaxed. I know God is with me. In silence, I entrust myself into the care of the Holy Spirit. Then, slowly, I read the gospel, pausing between each scene.

I may like to read the text contemplatively. Using my imagination, I try to see, hear and feel the hustle and bustle of Jerusalem at Passover. In the Temple courtyard I watch the clamour of market-sellers and money-changers. I become aware of Jesus making a whip, which he then uses to drive them out of the Temple. Does this action of Jesus surprise me? Do I feel challenged, disturbed, energised...

I then hear the people asking Jesus for a sign to prove his authority. Do I hear my own voice joining theirs? Are there times when I seem to ask for signs as a pre-requisite for belief? How fully do I believe that *the* sign, par-excellence, is the scandal of the Cross?

Jesus presents himself as the new temple. It may be that I think of my own life as a temple, or do I feel it is more like a market-place at times? Is there any place in my life where I desire cleansing or healing? Perhaps I could use this opportunity to consider the quality of my prayer and worship and the relationship I have with the Lord. I spend two or three minutes letting Jesus look on me with love.